

Medics with Wings; One Crew's Story

By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel
122nd MPAD

CAMP TAJI, Iraq -- It's the call no Soldier wants to make or hear. "Break! Break! Standby for nine-line medical evacuation" when those words come across the radio, radio traffic comes to an immediate halt, Soldiers are down; Soldiers need help.

Standing at the ready, able to move out as soon as the call is sent, are the Soldiers of the Army's Air Ambulance companies. This is the story of one crew, on one day, in one such company.

Sgt. Melinda Lauderdale is a medic with the 45th Medical Air Ambulance Company (Med AA Co.), 421st Medical Battalion stationed on Camp Taji.

"I've always had so much respect for the medics in the air," she said, "they're out there all by themselves. They would come in to drop off a patient and I would just think to myself.....that's what I want to do."

The day starts early for the 'first-up' crew, the sun just starting its rise in the sky. The biting cold of the early hour numbs the gloved hands of Spc. Anthony Mendoza, a crew chief with the 50th, as he assembles his flight vest, checking and re-checking everything.



Reno resident Sgt. Melinda Lauderdale of the 45th Med. AA Co., 421st Medical Battalion gears up for a familiarization flight.



Photos by Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD

Spc. Anthony Mendoza, a crew chief with the 50th Medical Air Ambulance Company, 101st Airborne Division, makes sure enough litters are on board his UH-60 Black Hawk as part of pre-mission inspections and preparation.

"Gotta make sure everything is online and ready to go," the Los Angeles native said. "You just never know when the call is going to come in."

'First-Up' means Mendoza and his crew are the first to respond when a call comes in, so Mendoza is making sure his UH-60 Black Hawk is ready to fly.

Filling out Mendoza's 'first-up' crew are the two pilots of the aircraft, Lauderdale, and a medic from the 50th, Staff Sgt. John Guardian.

Between flights the crews work to make sure everything is ready for the next mission, medics help crew chiefs and vice versa. On a good day there's enough spacing between flights to have the bird ready to go and still have some downtime.

Lauderdale sits reading a newspaper, Soldiers of her unit laugh and joke with the familiarity of a group that's been to hell and back together, shared experiences forge common bonds. As luck would have it, the power is out in the 45th's headquarters building pushing all of the Soldiers out to the courtyard just on the other side of the flight line.

"Normally when the power is working you'd spend the time between missions, checking e-mail, watching movies

in the ready room, that sort of stuff," Lauderdale said.

About half-way through their shift, the alarm on the radio goes off. Two birds are needed, seven are wounded. The easy banter and laughter of a few minutes ago is replaced with hurried motion and shouted calls as crew members sprint to their aircraft.

"Iraq police were hit, seven wounded," Lauderdale announced as the Black Hawk speeds through the air. Flying low and fast, the bird quickly makes it way to the scene and drops down, Lauderdale and Guardian jump out and begin tending to the wounded. Two patients load into the aircraft, one walks himself, Mendoza helps him adjust his seat belt. The other patient is brought in via litter, shrapnel wound to the head, time is of the essence as the crew straps him in, gives the pilots the thumbs up and the Black Hawk is in the air heading for the hospital.

Slouching down next to the newspaper she dropped when the call came in, Lauderdale is visibly exhausted.

"I love my job, I really do. I love helping people.....but, you come to work everyday hoping you don't fly," she said. "Any day we don't fly is a good day."

Scout Project Provides School Supplies to Iraqi Kids

By Staff Sgt. Susan German
122nd MPAD

SALHIYA, Baghdad -- As packages from home pour into Iraq, destined to make 1st Cavalry Division Soldiers' holidays a little brighter, so does the generosity extended to the Iraqi people.

The sources of goodwill are extensive; family-readiness groups, churches, friends and relatives are donors.

Soldiers from Task Force 3-8 Cav. delivered boxes filled with school supplies, toys and food to the Al A'ila Primary School, in the Salhiya neighborhood of the Karkh District, Dec. 8. Soldiers from Company B, 1st Battalion, 161st Infantry Regiment, from Kent, Wash., are primarily responsible for the security within the International Zone, according to Capt. Jonathan Beddall, from Davenport, Wash., Company B commander, 1-161 INF.

Beddall's nephew, Matthew Beddall, a 17-year-old high school senior from Mount Laurel, N.J., organized the donation of school supplies, food, and cash to pay for the shipping as part of an Eagle Scout project.

For three months they collected items based on a list of suggested items provided to them. Community donations resulted in 36 boxes being sent to Baghdad. Another 36 boxes were sent to a unit in southern Iraq.

"We are thankful for the families that sent this gift for the Iraqi kids because they make the kids happy," said Salhia Neighborhood Council Chairman Dhia Hussain Ali Mobarak.

The 1,200 boys and girls in grades one through six moved into the school's auditorium, with their hands on the shoulders of the kid in front of them. The younger kids filed in first, followed by the older ones, the excitement in their voices increasing as they made their way up to the distribution point. Their exit route took them past a row of Soldiers passing out large amounts of candy.

The kids returned to their classrooms, many of them thanking the Soldiers in English as they clutched plastic bags filled with candy and a variety of school supplies and toys.

"We're helping out, giving them a chance to have something that they wouldn't normally have," Spokane, Wash. resident Spc. Charles Newbill, from B Co., 1-161 INF, said.

A camera crew from CBS filmed the event for broadcast. At a time when the media is accused of focusing on the negative aspects of the Iraq experience, Beddall welcomed the television coverage and the opportunity to show the good things being done.

"If we get the media, who's filming, talking to kids, talking to us, when they come



By Staff Sgt. Susan German, 122nd MPAD

Pfc. Robert Elder (front), a medic from Company B, 1st Battalion, 161st Infantry Regiment, joins other Task Force 3-8 Cavalry Soldiers to hand out candy and snacks to children as they leave the Al A'ila Primary School auditorium after receiving school supplies and toys.

out here and show that we're not just killing people, that we're actually trying to help a little bit, that's a big thing," Beddall said.

Other projects have been completed at the school and the donation was the next step, according to Capt. Alexander Rasmussen, the civil military operations officer for Task Force 3-8 Cav.

"We delivered desks and some other furniture supplies here about four months ago and we also have a renovation project starting here, so we're trying to get a complete package," he said.

"I think it [school donations] keeps the human to human relations good. These

are kids, just like kids at home, they have the same needs, the same desires," Rasmussen said. "It takes you out of the situation for a moment and it does the same for the kids. I think that's the biggest benefit."

As the holidays near, a time in America for giving and receiving, it's not unusual for those traditions to flow over into other areas of the world as we help those less fortunate or suffering from the ravages of war. Through a team effort, Soldiers and Scouts, along with families back in the United States, joined together to make one day in the life of some Iraqi children a little better.

Useful Iraqi Words/Phrases

What time do we get back?
matta sa-narjAH?

Tuesday
High: 58
Low: 37



Wednesday
High: 61
Low: 38



Thursday
High: 63
Low: 38



Weather information provided by 1CD Staff Weather Office (SWO)

Commanding General: Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli

Public Affairs Officer: Lt. Col. James Hutton

122nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment Cmdr.: Maj. John Fuhrman

Public Affairs Supervisor: Master Sgt. Dave Larsen

1st Sgt. 122nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment: 1st Sgt. William Kuhns

Editor: Spc. Marie Whitney

Staff Writers: Staff Sgt. Susan German, Staff Sgt. Rebekah-mae Bruns, Sgt. Dan Purcell, Sgt. Christina Rockhill, Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, Cpl. Bill

Putnam, Spc. Jan Critchfield, Spc. Andy Miller, Spc. Erik LeDrew, Spc. Al Barrus, Spc. Erin Robicheaux Pfc. Brian Schroeder, Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin.

The Daily Charge is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of **The Daily Charge** are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or the 1st Cavalry Division. All editorial content of **The Daily Charge** is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs Office.

News Notes

Police Dog Deals Low Blow to Man

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) -- A naked man was bit in the genitals by a police dog while being arrested for running nude and entering homes in a Minneapolis neighborhood. The man was taken to the hospital for treatment of his injuries. A police canine unit found the nude suspect shortly after noon in a house. While the officer was ordering the suspect out of the house, the suspect began hitting him, police said. The dog, which was still leashed, bit the suspect to protect the officer. "The dog did what the dog is trained to do, and that is protect his handler," Reier said. After the man was bit, he continued to attack officers and police used a stun gun before eventually restraining him, police said. Officer Ron Reier, a department spokesman, said police dogs are trained to bite if their partner is attacked. "The dog did what the dog is trained to do, and that is protect his handler," Reier said.

Woman Calls Cops, Changes Mind

WATERLOO, Iowa (AP) -- A woman called police to report that her dealer sold her bad drugs. The woman made the call from a coin-operated laundry and told police a drug dealer sold her crack cocaine that was possible fake. By the time police arrived, she apparently changed her mind about filing the complaint and was gone.

Rare Tiger Cubs Shown for First Time

SEATTLE (*Seattle Times*) -- The Woodland Park Zoo's two rare Sumatran tiger cubs were too busy pouncing on plants, play-wrestling with each other and generally behaving like kittens yesterday to notice the crowds that filed in to watch them frolic in their temporary exhibit space.

Dozens of zoo attendees of all ages waited in sometimes-lengthy lines to catch a glimpse of the cubs for the first time since they were born here in

September.

Besides being cute, the cubs represent a significant addition to the world's tiger population, said zookeeper Amy Brandt. All five subspecies of tigers are endangered, but Sumatran tigers are the most rare, with only 400 believed to be left in the wild.

The two male cubs, Langka and Manis, have distinct personalities, Brandt said. Langka, whose name means "rare" in Indonesian, is the

more energetic of the two, she said. He's exuberant and inquisitive, just like his mother, JoJo, she said. Manis, whose name means "sweet" in Indonesian, is much more laid-back than his brother, even timid at times, and takes after his father, Brandt said.

"They are just adorable," she said, "and they're just going to get cuter and cuter."

The cubs were kept in seclusion until now to make it easier for them to bond with their mother. They will remain in their heated indoor exhibit with the mother at least until spring, when the weather warms enough for them to move to an outdoor space, Brandt said. Now, the outdoor area is too chilly, and given the cubs' penchant for tumbling, they could hurt themselves, she said.

The two male cubs were the second litter born to JoJo and father Rakata. Breeding tigers can be a challenge because of the animals' solitary, territorial natures and because it's difficult to predict how two tigers will react to each other.

It took zookeepers years to get JoJo and Rakata accustomed to each other, she said.



Seattle Times

It's just brotherly love as a 3-month-old Sumatran tiger cub chews on his twin's paw at the Woodland Park Zoo.

Skater Haven Planned at Park in Killeen

KILLEEN, Texas (*Killeen Daily Herald*) -- Curbs darkened by skateboard wax can be found at locations throughout the city. They are the tell-tale sign of a sport without a home - until now.

The city of Killeen is answering the pleas of local skateboarders with a skate park, slated to be ready in June.

The park, planned for the existing pavilion in Conder Park, will cost the city about \$100,000. The project funds will come from a recent bond issue for capital improvement projects.

Mayor Maureen Jouett said this project has been a long time coming. She was first contacted by a local skater in 2001 about getting a skate park. Since then, other skaters have blown up her e-mail with requests for a place they can "shred" legally.

"The age group for this is a demographic we're not really reaching," Jouett said. "We have to provide a needed resource for these kids."

The park should be ready for skaters shortly after school lets out this summer, said Killeen Parks and Recreation Supervisor Glen Morrison.



Killeen Daily Herald

Skateboarders such as Cody McEntire and Scott Bodrey, right, will no longer have to search for the perfect site to ride their boards.

The skate park is now in the design phase.

Morrison said the city has been talking with the experts - park designers and skaters, themselves - about what should be included in the park. The park is expected to accommodate 30 to 40 skaters.

Chargers Dash Past Browns for Title

CLEVELAND (AP) -- Those lightning-bolt decals streaking across their helmets have never been more fitting. The San Diego Chargers have shocked the NFL - and maybe even themselves.

LaDainian Tomlinson rushed for 111 yards and two touchdowns, Antonio Gates tied a league record with his 12th TD and San Diego captured the AFC West title Sunday, with a 21-0 win over the Cleveland Browns.

One season after a league-worst 4-12 mark, the Chargers (11-3) won their eighth straight and earned their first postseason berth since 1995 when Denver lost at Kansas city. They're division champions for the first time since 1994.

"I've only been here for four years, but in some ways it feels like eight," Tomlinson said. "To go from where we were to this is awesome. I've dreamed of the playoffs for a long time, but it's only been a dream."

Reality set in quickly. As the Chargers walked off the frozen field, each player was handed an "AFC West 2004 Champions" baseball cap.

"This feels great," said quarterback Drew Brees, who attempted just six passes. "It's been a long road for San Diego fans and us. It feels great because we weren't expected to do too much this year. Instead of 11-3, a lot of people thought we'd be 3-11."

With a mistake-free offense and hard-nosed defense, coach Marty Schottenheimer has led the Chargers to their longest win streak since 1987 and turned them into the league's most unlikely success story.

"We're riding the wave," fullback Lorenzo Neal said.

San Diego, which hasn't lost since Oct. 17,



AP

San Diego Chargers' LaDainian Tomlinson runs for 20 yards against Cleveland Browns defender Lewis Sanders, left, in the first quarter Sunday. The Chargers won 21-0.

also showed it can be a factor in the postseason regardless of climate. The Chargers ignored the blowing snow, a game-time temperature of 18 and a subzero wind chill to post their first shutout since 1993 and handle the Browns (3-11), who lost their eighth straight.

After winning on the frozen shores of Lake Erie, the Chargers should be prepared to play in frigid New England or Pittsburgh in the playoffs.

"Our confidence is just snowballing with each performance," Gates said. "We're playing at a tremendous level and we want it to continue. This is one step," he said. "We want to go to the Super Bowl."

Miami Burns Magic in 8th Straight Win

MIAMI (AP) -- When the Miami Heat gave Shaquille O'Neal a chance to keep their winning streak going, he passed. Twice.

Two nifty assists by O'Neal sparked a 13-point run late in the fourth quarter by the Heat, who won their eighth game in a row, beating the Orlando Magic 117-107 Sunday night.

"I found my shooters a couple of times," O'Neal said. "They know if they get open, I'm going to hit them for the high-percentage shot."

The Heat trailed much of the game and were down 103-102 with five minutes left before O'Neal helped them surge ahead.

On consecutive possessions, O'Neal hit a dunk, fed



AP

Orlando Magic's Tony Battie, background, pressures Miami Heat's Shaquille O'Neal in the fourth quarter Sunday. Miami won, 117-107.

Eddie Jones for a 3-pointer that put Miami ahead to stay, then passed to Christian Laettner for a layup to make it 107-103. O'Neal's three-point

play a minute later made it 110-103.

"At the end we just ran everything through Shaq," coach Stan Van Gundy said. "As the game goes on, the quick guys get tired and a little slower, but the big guys don't shrink."

O'Neal finished with 27 points and five assists.

"When you've got Shaq on the team, you keep feeding him," guard Keyon Dooling said. "That's a no-brainer."

Led by their new center, the Heat are on their longest winning streak since March 1998.

"We're getting better and putting together wins," O'Neal said. "We're not blowing people out all the time, but we'll get to that."

In Brief

TLC Looking for Temporary Help

NEW YORK (AP) -- Rozonda "Chilli" Thomas and Tionne "T-Boz" Watkins



are looking to collaborate with a new voice, but the TLC stars insist they're not trying to replace the late Lisa "Left Eye" Lopes. "Nothing has changed. We're not replacing Lisa," Thomas told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "We're not looking for a new member." Some fans were concerned that Thomas and Watkins were seeking to fill the shoes of Lopes, who died in a car crash in Honduras in 2002.

Blockbuster to Drop Late Fees

(CBS/AP) -- Blockbuster Inc., plans to eliminate late fees on games and movies as of Jan. 1. But there is plenty of fine print, which suggests that the rental company is still struggling to come up with a formula to blunt the threat from Netflix and cable operators' movies-on-demand offerings. Blockbuster is also offering a monthly flat-fee rent-by-mail program. Blockbuster said Tuesday it will continue to set due dates, with one week for games and two days or one week for movies. But the company will give customers a one-week grace period at no additional charge, starting on New Year's Day.